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Congresswoman McCollum Hails House Passage of Landmark Child Nutrition Bill

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) today praised the passage of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* (S. 3307) in the House of Representatives. The bill contains the most significant improvements to the child nutrition programs in over 30 years, and it includes critical provisions from Congresswoman McCollum's *National Farm to School Act* (H.R. 5456).

"As a former teacher, I know that hungry students cannot fulfill their potential in the classroom. Grumbling stomachs distract them from their schoolwork," said Congresswoman McCollum. "Over 600,000 Minnesota children benefit from the National School Lunch program. With this difficult economy putting more people into poverty, this program provides a lifeline for families struggling to feed their children. The *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* will improve the quality of meals served in schools, allow for easier determination of eligibility, and finally update nutrition standards so that our children get well-balanced diets."

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, there has been an 8.5 percent increase in the number of students on free and reduced lunch since 2009. In St. Paul, over 900 additional students qualified for free and reduced lunch this year due to the growing number of families facing economic hardship.

Section 243 of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* also includes language from Congresswoman McCollum's bill to provide grants up to \$100,000 for school districts to implement farm to school programs. Roughly 100 Minnesota school districts now have programs that purchase fresh produce from local farmers - more than triple the number from 2008. This legislation also provides \$40 million in funding for farm to school efforts.

"Such strong support for farm-to-school programs in the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* will provide a win-win for our children and Minnesota farmers," said Congresswoman McCollum. "Farmers are able to access local markets and keep more local food dollars here at home while giving schoolchildren more nutritious food in their lunches. We will now be able to expand our

Minnesota model to be replicated nationwide thanks to this bill."

S. 3307 will further strengthen the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Currently, over 137,000 Minnesota children receive WIC benefits and over 93,000 Minnesota children receive meals through the CACFP. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act allows WIC providers to be able to certify children with less paperwork and expands eligibility for the CACFP program to allow more children to be able to obtain free or reduced price meals at day care and afterschool programs.

The bill was finally passed after Republicans used a procedural move yesterday to obstruct passage.

"I am pleased we were able to pass this critical legislation for our nation's children and overcome the political stunts by Republicans wanting to kill the bill," said Congresswoman McCollum.

The legislation now awaits President Obama's signature.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees.
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Endorsement Quotes:

Minnesota organizations praise Congresswoman McCollum Farm-to-School provisions:

"St. Paul Public Schools is pleased that the House has passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. This legislation provides for an additional six cents per lunch for students. This small amount will have a significant impact because it will provide more fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains for the approximate 30,000 students that eat lunch with us each day in St. Paul. It is another step forward in our efforts to raise healthy children and reverse the childhood obesity crisis in this country. In addition, St. Paul has been a national leader in implementing

farm-to-school programs that allow our children to eat Minnesota apples, wild rice and bison. During the first six weeks of the 2009-2010 school year alone, St. Paul Public Schools purchased 110,000 pounds of locally grown produce, primarily from local farms. We are fortunate to have legislators like Rep. Betty McCollum, who understand that there is a critical link between children's health and educational achievement."

- *Jean Ronnei, Saint Paul Public Schools, Director, Nutrition & Custodial Services*

"Farm-to-school is the way of the future and Minnesota is at the forefront of this movement. These programs are one of the best ways to get fresh, healthy food to kids, while teaching them about food and nutrition. With a greater investment in Farm to School, we can provide even more opportunities for local farmers and put kids on a lifelong path to healthy eating. We thank Rep. Betty McCollum for introducing the National Farm-to-School Act and applaud its inclusion in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act."

- *JoAnne Berkenkamp, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Local Food Program Director*

"Thankfully Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act which, among other things, includes a Farm-to-School program which aims to help leverage local food grown by local farmers into local schools. Farm-to-school is the seed money to help establish the working connections between farmers and schools. Many farmers would like to take advantage of new markets like schools but the infrastructure just hasn't been there --- farm-to-school begins to change that dynamic. A big thanks to Rep. Betty McCollum for her leadership over the past year in ensuring farm-to-school ended up in the final bill."

- *Ted Winter, Land Stewardship Project, Fulda area farmer and LSP Policy Committee member*